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WORLD-POLITICS.

LONDON: ST. PETERSBURG.

LONDON, *March, 1907.*

SINCE my last communication we have passed through some not uneventful weeks. Parliament has met, is now, indeed, on the point of adjourning for the Easter recess, and the London County Council elections have been held. The latter event positively for a time overshadowed the former. The opening days of March saw a phenomenon unique in English politics. It saw London, and not only London, but the whole country, turning its back on the national legislature at Westminster and absorbed in a purely local struggle for the capture of the capital. Like nearly every metropolis, London, as a rule, is magnificently indifferent to its civic affairs. It is altogether too rich, too languid, too vast, too sociable to develop any real sense of corporate unity, any active and genuine consciousness of local patriotism. Until the campaign of a few weeks ago, the municipal electorate of London was very largely an unplumbed sea. It was rarely that more than half the voters on the register took the trouble to go to the poll. In the eighteen years of its existence, the London County Council, except between 1895 and 1898, when the two parties were equally balanced, had been uniformly under the control of the Progressives, of those, that is, who favored the policy of municipal ownership. Their opponents, the Moderates, or, as they now call themselves, the Municipal Reformers, having no alternative policy to put forward and no effective rallying cry, had been practically reduced to the rôle of unproductive criticism. But this year, for the first time in their history, they roused themselves to a tremendous effort. They collected a huge campaign fund, covered the walls with cartoons and placards, deafened the city with their denunciations of extrava-

gance, socialism, jobbery and inefficiency, and after a struggle of almost incredible abuse, they flung the Progressives out of power. Before the election, the Progressives had a majority of 50; to-day they are in a minority of 40. But it is an amazing commentary on London's imperturbable want of interest in local questions that, even after these unparalleled efforts, only fifty-two per cent. of the voters went to the poll.

It is difficult to appraise aright a victory won by such means and so clearly destitute of finality. Taking it as a whole the Progressives' record during the past eighteen years has been one of splendid energy and success. They have made London a cleaner, brighter, healthier and far more convenient city to live in and move about in. Some of their enterprises may have been unfortunate—the municipal service of steamers on the Thames, for instance, has turned out badly—and a certain amount of wastefulness may properly be charged against them. But no suggestion of corruption or “graft” has ever clung to them, and in rescuing water, light and traction from the grip of private monopolies they have unquestionably been carrying out a policy that commends itself to the great majority of Londoners. As a matter of fact, London is still very far behind Glasgow, Birmingham and Manchester in the development of municipal enterprise. It is true that the rates have risen on an average throughout London in the last ten years by one shilling and fourpence (about thirty-three cents). But only an infinitesimal portion of this increase can be laid at the door of the County Council—not more, I think, than twopence. The growing needs of education and the Conservative policy of putting the denominational schools upon the rates have been responsible for most of it; and the borough councils and guardians, on which bodies the Moderates have usually predominated, and the metropolitan asylums board for the remainder. The Moderates at the recent election obscured these facts by every artifice of misrepresentation. They made the most of the loss on the Thames steamboats and of two or three other shortcomings and irregularities that, except during an election, nobody would have thought worth troubling about. With far greater fairness and effect they argued that the policy pursued by the Progressives could only end in the duplication, on an infinitely vaster scale, of the scandals that had been unearthed in Poplar and West Ham, in the gradual repres-

sion of individual effort and enterprise, and in the erection of a spendthrift, demoralized and semi-Socialist state. They attacked, too, the Progressives' methods of finance and accounts, and charged them with concealing losses on some of their undertakings by a confused system of bookkeeping and inadequate audits.

All this told heavily. 'Many people felt, anyway, that the Progressives had been in office quite long enough, and that a few years of opposition would do them no harm. Many more were disturbed by the projects of old-age pensions, State aid for the unemployed, free meals for school children, and so on, which the incursion of the Labor Party has thrust into the forefront of English politics, and were anxious to strike at the spirit behind such projects at every opportunity. Again, the Progressives were appealing to Parliament for power to institute an enormous scheme for placing the electric-lighting supply of all London under County Council control. Moreover, hitherto a Progressive majority on the County Council has always coincided with a Conservative majority in the House of Commons; and this has meant that, in the many cases where Parliamentary authority has had to be sought for County Council enterprises, the Progressives have been checked and denied. But now, with a Radical Government overwhelmingly in power at Westminster, this hindrance has been removed; and it was rightly suspected that, if the Progressives were again returned to office, they would find the path of reform lying absolutely clear before them and might be tempted, and even urged, into throwing off all restraint. These reasons, and many like them, combined to sweep the Moderates into power. Their achievements and policy in office, I venture to predict, will be mainly negative. They will not encourage any more municipal undertakings, but they will not attempt to cut down those that now exist. The public services will go on very much as before and be maintained in all their present efficiency. The rates, therefore, will not be sensibly reduced, nor will the County Council's income be sensibly increased.

In the wider sphere of national affairs, the past month has produced much that is interesting and important, but little that is exciting, and Parliament, while always fully occupied, has been spared big debates and first-class measures. After the strain and contentiousness of the session of 1906, the change is as

welcome to the nation at large as it must be to the Members themselves, with the exception, of course, of those insatiable Radicals who count every day wasted on which some bill does not receive the royal assent. It will not be until after the Easter holidays that the tug-of-war is renewed in the right spirit of ferocity. Nevertheless, the session so far has been far from barren. It has seen the introduction of Mr. Haldane's scheme for the reconstruction of the auxiliary forces, a scheme which aims at forming a second-line army, 300,000 strong, by amalgamating the Militia, Volunteers and Yeomanry, and organizing them in fourteen divisions under the direction of country associations. I am quite incompetent to pronounce upon the merits of this plan. It took Mr. Haldane, who is not a loquacious statesman, about three hours to unfold it to the House; and it would probably take me three years to understand it. But I gather, first, that military opinion is, on the whole, favorable to it; secondly, that it depends on time and the people themselves to make it work; and thirdly, that if it breaks down, the whole system of voluntary enlistment for national defence falls with it. Mr. Haldane announced a reduction in the army estimates of more than \$10,000,000; and, a week later, the Government, while pledging itself to maintain both now and in the future the two-Power standard, foreshadowed an aggregate decrease in naval expenditure of \$12,500,000 as compared with the previous year, and of \$40,000,000 as compared with three years ago. Besides these defence measures, Parliament has talked out a bill conferring a limited suffrage on women, has discussed many colonial questions, has considered one bill for establishing a dual ownership of the land on a compulsory basis in Scotland, and another for relieving the local education authorities of the cost of special religious instruction in the Church of England schools, has set about reforming Parliamentary procedure once more, and has passed a platonic motion in favor of disestablishment.

Moreover, the month has been made memorable by the emergence into public life of Lord Curzon, who has announced his intention of reentering Parliament before long, and whom the House and country will welcome with acclamation when he steps once more into the arena. Hardly less noteworthy was the explosively candid speech delivered by Lord Rosebery, who for the past fifteen months has kept altogether in the background, on

March 26th to the members of the Liberal League, an organization which he founded and over which he still presides for the purpose of propagating among Liberals a spirit of sane and consecutive imperialism abroad and of cautious step-by-step reform at home. In that speech Lord Rosebery warned the Government against the folly of overloading their programme and making more promises than they could possibly fulfil. He feared that in its policy in regard to temperance, the land question and the House of Lords, the Liberal Party "might find itself permanently connected with hostility to property in all its forms, and if that were so the party would at no distant date be squeezed out between Socialism and Conservatism." He criticised with great and justifiable severity the proposal to introduce the ruinous system of dual land ownership into England, prophesied that little more would be heard of the Irish Education Bill outlined by Mr. Bryce, reiterated his objection to Home Rule, and reminded the Government that nearly all Liberal Governments fell because they filled property with a sense of insecurity. He scoffed, too, at the "something terrible" which the Government had pledged itself to do with the House of Lords; and here Lord Rosebery showed all his old instinct for divining and expressing the unspoken thought of the nation.

When this letter appears in print the Colonial Premiers will have assembled in London for the third Colonial Conference. A day or two later Mr. Asquith will be introducing his budget, and expectation is keen to see how he will deal with a surplus which is expected to reach \$25,000,000. A penny off the income tax is looked forward to with every confidence, but whether sugar, tea or tobacco or all three are also to benefit is a secret closely guarded. Simultaneously with the budget, Mr. Birrell will probably be bringing forward his bill, as the King's speech put it, "for further associating the people of Ireland with the management of their domestic affairs and for otherwise improving the system of government." Another and not less critical bill for the reform of Irish University education will also be under Mr. Birrell's care, and in addition various land, licensing and labor measures are promised. When Parliament reassembles after the Easter recess it will be to plunge at once into legislation that, in my judgment, will go very far towards determining the fate of the present Cabinet.

ST. PETERSBURG, *March, 1907.*

THE curtain is now being rung up on a new act of the national drama. Russia has chosen her spokesmen, the elections are over, the people's champions are face to face with the Tsar's counsellors, the tug of constitutional war is beginning anew. The intellectual level of the bulk of the nation is hardly more elevated than was that of the inhabitants of Nineveh described in the Book of Jonah, who could not discern between their right hand and their left hand. With few exceptions they care exclusively for the matters that interest themselves: the peasants for free land, the Jews for equal rights, the Poles for self-government, the Armenians and Georgians for autonomy, the working-men for short hours and high wages, the Social Democrats for the nationalization of land and capital. There is no general programme for the government of the nation.

Freedom of election was clamorously demanded by all and violated by nearly all who had the power, including the lawful authorities. Many voted who possessed no right whatever, some personating the dead, others bearing voting papers which they had bought. Clerks were compelled by their employers to fill up and take to the urns the papers of the party to which he belonged. In Kursk an elector who belonged to a moderate group was assassinated for not being radical, and letters were forwarded to many moderate constituents threatening them with the same fate if they should hinder the election of the popular candidate.

A number of excellent deputies, whose absence is a loss for the Duma and the country, were defeated simply because there was no political, much less patriotic, standard among the constituents. "Every man is as good as his neighbor, and the fewer good qualities he has the better," would seem to have been the guiding but unavowed principle. Count Heyden, for instance, who was one of the most active deputies in the first Duma, a ready speaker, a resourceful debater and a man of well-balanced intellect, was unhesitatingly sacrificed to a nobody. M. Lvoff, of Saratoff, who may without exaggeration be termed one of the pioneers of free Russia, has also been refused a mandate. M. Lvoff was one of the most prominent members of the first Zemstvo Congress in Moscow who delivered a speech there on the need of a constitution which will never be forgotten in the annals of Russian history. The peasants cut down the trees of

his forest, inflicting upon him a loss of thousands of dollars, but he refused to send for the soldiery. A twelvemonth later his manor and other property were burned to ashes by the peasants, who feel no gratitude towards a beneficent landlord. But he bore all these and other trials heroically and never swerved from his principle of liberalism and progress tempered by legality and respect for the rights of minorities.

In some cases the choice made was as curious as the rejection. Among those who have now received mandates for the first time are certain leaders of the League of the Genuine Russian People, an organization of monarchists whose ideal is a return to the autocratic *régime* pure and simple and whose present practical aim is the strengthening of the monarchic and the weakening of the republican party. One of these politicians is the well-known Jew-baiter Krushevan, to whose inflammatory diatribes anti-Jewish riots have been attributed in the south of Russia. Krushevan's name makes every sensitive Jew shudder. Another is Purishkevich, whom his followers regard as an ardent monarchist and patriot, and from whom they expect great things in the future. It is well that these men should be sent to the legislative chamber, and it is a pity that so many of the leaders of the other parties, men like Miliukoff, Heyden, Guchkoff, Lvoff and Kovalevsky, have been excluded. That, however, is the reflection of an outsider. Russians view the matter from a different angle of vision. And feeling runs especially high against the monarchist leaders and the anti-semites. The mere fact that they are in the Duma has caused a ferment in every city and town of the south where the Jews constitute an element of the population. They are in receipt of threatening letters which come by every mail. In their press organ the following significant notice appeared in large type: "In consequence of the threats received by Krushevan and Purishkevich, it is hereby announced that for their inviolability shall be held answerable the Jews: Vinaver, Hessen, Kiesewetter and Miliukoff. The other enemies of Krushevan need not fear anything as yet." A characteristic announcement.

Into the first Duma both the revolutionists and socialists were smuggled under the colors of the Constitutional Democrats. They did not venture to form a party of their own, lest they should be all arrested in one haul and sent to Siberia. For that reason they called themselves Constitutional Democrats, won places in

the Chamber and remained for a time together with the Democrats, their protectors. Now, however, they have a party organization of their own, are implicitly recognized by the Government and are even mentioned by the Government press organs. That is why so many people are under the impression that since the first Duma was dissolved the country has become more radical, more anti-monarchical. In reality it has turned more moderate, more conservative. On the one hand the revolutionists who are now in the second Duma might have been elected last year to the first and many more with them, if they had dared to come forward as candidates instead of boycotting the elections as so many of them did. And on the other hand the extreme monarchists who have now been returned had no chance of election last year. The second Duma has two orthodox Bishops, two leaders of the extreme autocratic party and a considerable group of monarchists, all elected by people who would not have given them a vote a twelvemonth ago.

And yet complaints are being made that even now the real Russian people have not spoken out. They made no response, it is said, to the appeal to send good men and true to the legislative assembly. In the district of the Bakhmoot, in Southern Russia, for example, out of three thousand persons who had votes to record, just one hundred and five recorded them. The remainder stayed at home heedless of the needs of the nation, deaf to the promptings of the voice of duty. In the district of Upper Dneprovsk there were 1,458 persons duly qualified to vote, yet only thirty-five put in an appearance! In the district of Sviashsk, the number of qualified voters was 628, whereas no more than eighty-five came to the poll. In the cities and towns the proportion of actual voters to the number of persons qualified was very much larger. But in most places individuals were chosen for their hostility to the Government.

Whatever, therefore, may be said of the difficulty of getting the masses to come forward and vote, it is useless to blink the fact that a large percentage of the population is hostile to the Government and that the Government is itself greatly to blame. It is not merely that the local authorities in many places, as for instance in Moscow, disregarding Stolypin's instructions, put undue pressure upon the voters, but in many other ways the officials turned the population against their cause, which is that of

the Tsar and the Empire. The list of the bureaucracy's sins of omission and commission is long. On the one hand the Government does not possess the courage of its convictions; it preaches political principles for the public and ignores them itself. It treats the letter of the law with unbounded respect and attacks the spirit of it with deliberation and success. Thus the Premier refused to repeal the electoral law because to do so would be to violate other statutes, but he had no hesitation in undoing its provisions by getting the Senate to "interpret" them. On the one hand M. Stolypin lacks courage in presence of the court party. For example, he promised a number of reforms to the people when he first took over the portfolio of Prime Minister, and in that way he made a distinct bid for popularity. He was not obliged to make those promises, so that his offer was quite voluntary. Among them was a bill to give relief to the Jews, whose status in Russia is highly unsatisfactory and extremely vague. Well, he drafted the bill in question in order to keep his word, he whittled it down considerably in order to keep his place, and finally sacrificed it altogether because such was the good pleasure of the court party. And that is not the kind of light and leading which a people in revolution have a right to expect from the chief administrator of the Empire.

Why the Tsar has not opened the legislative Chamber in person, nor written a Speech from the Throne, needs no lengthy explanation. The formal reason is this: if he appeared in person last year it was because the two Houses were constituted for the first time, whereas there is now only one new Chamber—the Duma, and it is the second of its kind. But the real reason lies deeper. Last summer the monarch welcomed the Deputies in the Winter Palace, called them Russia's best men, renewed his promise to carry out all the reforms outlined in the Manifesto, and having done all this was subjected to the icy-cold gaze of the Deputies, who did not greet him with a cheer nor even thank him afterwards in the official reply to the Speech from the Throne. Naturally he felt offended. Why, he probably asks himself now, should he undergo the ordeal a second time unnecessarily? Whenever he meets with a reasonable, businesslike Duma, he will employ the forms usual between monarchs and their peoples' representatives. But at present there are no trustworthy signs that such a Chamber has met.

Indeed, the symptoms of the day are alarmingly anti-monarchical. Heretofore the principal revolutionary parties proclaimed their intention to leave the monarch in peace while cutting down his servants. Now for the first time they have changed their tactics and cancelled their decree by which his inviolability was respected. And feeling in the country is being artificially roused against the Tsar. Pamphlets are published in Novgorod, Pensa, Tver, Odessa which allude to him in terms of vulgar abuse, and no efforts are spared to hold him and his dynasty up to contempt or hatred. That is a significant, it may also be a fateful, change of tactics. And when we remember that there is a strong party of avowed revolutionists in the Duma—we cannot affect surprise at the caution displayed by Nikolai Alexandrovitch.

Nothing could well be more characteristic of the situation than the flippancy with which bombs are now spoken of. Unless a man has been actually killed or wounded, an attempt at murder is passed off as a joke. Two infernal machines were found in Count Witte's house, and in court circles people scoffed and said that the ex-Premier had himself put them down his chimney. Soon afterwards a bomb was found on the imperial railway to Tsarskoye Selo and the bombist who laid it there escaped. Now it was the turn of the Liberals to indulge in unseemly jokes at Stolypin's expense. And in this way the nation is gradually losing its sense of right and wrong, of just and unjust. And all parties are to blame.

Whether the second Duma will remedy this or any other of the evils which are ruining the people time will show. The unbiassed observer will naturally feel sceptical, nor will he believe in the Duma's capacity for serious work until he has seen bills properly discussed and laws actually made. What he cannot doubt, however, is the nation's pressing need of speedy succor. A patriotic yet liberal Russian writer thus characterizes the condition of his fellow citizens: "The Russian people is impoverished, jaded, worn out, and like all unfortunate people is fallen morally. It has taken to drink, to lewdness, to quarrelling, and all the ancient authorities have been swept away. The sustaining power derived from culture, family training, religion, education, social discipline, respect for State institutions—all that is falling from the shoulders of the nation like a garment in rags."